

21 April 2008: Reflections from a Conference

There was a woman I listened to today who asked her students to take a sheet of paper and divide it into four spaces. In each of the spaces she has them write "physical," "mental," "spiritual", and "emotional." The entire class is asked to call out ways they take care of their physical health. (try this now in your head)

The class usually comes up with "taking a shower," "sleeping," "eating nutritious food," "exercising"...you get the point. Then she asks what they do to take care of their health in the other three areas. They take time to write down their answers. The majority of the time, students cannot legitimately fill in each space. If students ARE able to fill in the spaces, they don't have near as long of a list as that under "physical."

This woman reminded me of two things:

1) Most students don't know how to take care of their "other" healths. They aren't taught in school. Maybe they have a religious practice or Sunday school for spiritual stuff. What about everything else? Don't they deserve to have proper mental, spiritual, and emotional hygiene? I don't want my kids to smell, eat bad food, or have rotten teeth, but I also don't want them to be mentally starved, spiritually empty, and emotionally wrought.

2) I have been blessed with some of the tools to be clean and healthy mentally, spiritually, and emotionally, yet I listen to the time-oriented pressures of society and DON'T PRACTICE these things. I have a poor priority system---get the physical health stuff out of the way so society will accept my outward appearance...but what is going on inside? Am I a whole person if I am only taking care of 25% of myself? And isn't the other 75% intrinsically connected to the physical? How can I nurture one piece and not the others? I know that I need to take care of myself in order to take care of others...so why am I hesitant? Why do I make excuses? And why am I not sharing what I know with others? These tools I have been given are precious gifts to give again. And there is so much more to explore! Herbology! Ayurveda! T'ai Chi! These things I can use in the classroom to help students explore and expand themselves as I explore and expand me.